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FILE

JAN 11 1963

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. McGEORGE BUNDY  
THE WHITE HOUSE

Subject: Status report on negotiations for  
settlement of Chamizal dispute

This memorandum is in response to the President's request of January 9 to Assistant Secretary Martin for a status report on negotiations for settlement of the Chamizal dispute.

Ambassador Mann outlined informally to the Mexican Foreign Minister on August 9, 1962, a proposal for solution of the Chamizal dispute. At the same time he left with the Minister a draft note which would be delivered if Mexico considered the proposal a basis for negotiation. At the request of Vice President Johnson we did not press for a decision in September and October 1962 to keep the Chamizal dispute from becoming embroiled in the election campaign in Texas. Moreover, the President of Mexico and his Foreign Minister were on a trip to the Far East during October 1962. On January 4, the Foreign Minister informed Ambassador Mann that he would like to enter into detailed discussion of the salinity and Chamizal problems when the Ambassador returns to Mexico City on January 14.

The proposal which Ambassador Mann outlined informally to the Foreign Minister involves digging a new channel for the Rio Grande at El Paso which would transfer to Mexico a net of 437 acres of territory over which the United States now exercises jurisdiction. This is the most favorable offer we have considered making to Mexico in our 50-year effort to settle this dispute. The Mexican and United States Commissioners agreed that they could support a figure of 437 as the acreage south of the 1864 river which was awarded to Mexico in 1911. Previously the Mexican Government had insisted that the area south of the 1864 river consisted of 450 acres whereas the most we would agree to was 420 acres. Because of the location of buildings in the Chamizal Zone, particularly a high school, El Paso has been unwilling to agree to transfer more than 336 acres from the

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Chamizal Zone itself. It is prepared to make up the remainder of the acreage from the area east of Cordova Island. The "island" itself is under Mexican jurisdiction. In rectifying the river at El Paso, some 228 acres of Cordova Island which protrudes into downtown El Paso would be transferred to the United States, and Mexico would be compensated with an equal acreage east of Cordova Island. The possibility that the northern half of Cordova Island would be transferred to El Paso is the feature of the proposal that makes a solution attractive to El Paso. The attached map shows this proposed solution.

The foregoing solution has been discussed with the Governor of Texas and city officials and civic groups in El Paso and is acceptable to them. We have also consulted with the Vice President's Office and interested Senators and Congressmen. A solution along these lines is also generally acceptable to them. Senator Tower has not approved the solution but stated he would go along with any solution approved by the people of El Paso. It is believed that Congressman Foreman, who now represents El Paso, would agree, but he made no commitment when Commissioner Friedman briefed him on the dispute.

The Mexican Foreign Minister is not enthusiastic about our proposal for settlement. He wants as much as possible of the 437 acres to come from the Chamizal Zone. We are proposing that 336 acres come from the Chamizal Zone and 101 acres from the area east of and adjacent to Cordova Island. He apparently considers that Mexico should receive about 380 to 400 acres in the Chamizal Zone with the remainder to come from land east of Cordova Island. On the other hand, the proposal would be unacceptable to El Paso and Texas if we suggested any significant increase in the acreage in the Chamizal Zone to be transferred to Mexico or significantly decreased the acreage from Cordova Island which El Paso hopes to receive.

Enclosure:

Map showing proposed solution.

(1cc FROM BUREAU  
LARGE MAP  
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WALTER LUBKEMANN  
William H. Brubeck  
Executive Secretary

JAN 11 1963

A true copy of signed original

ARA - Mr. Martin

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